J. Moher, Walter Citrine: Forgotten Statesman of the Trades Union Congress, (2021)

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In this issue

After a year of disruption, it is pleasing to see a jam-packed issue of the Newsletter. It is hopefully a sign of things to come – there are plenty more short research pieces, reviews, and backlog of lecture reports still to appear.

Keep an eye out for updates about our events via email, social media (especially Facebook), and the website.

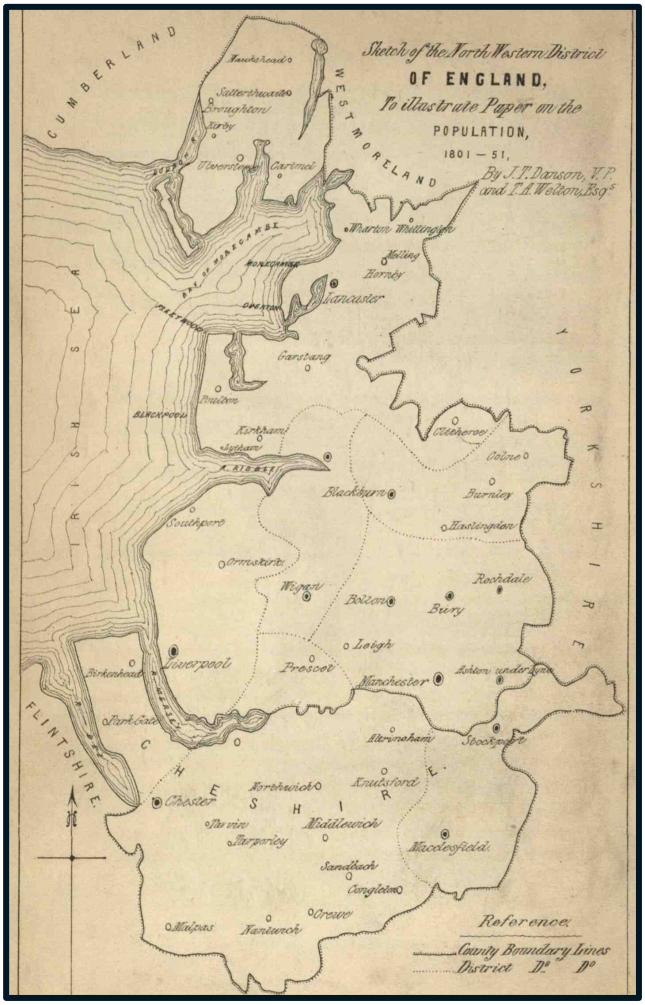
– James Evans, Newsletter Editor

Counting the people in Lancashire and Cheshire: references to the Census in *Transactions* before 1911

Record offices and archive search rooms are beginning to open up as we come out of lockdown, but while they've been closed I have been delving into old (especially nineteenth-century) editions of *Transactions*. Most of us will have spent some time around Sunday 21st March completing our census form; some of us may even be looking forward to next January when the 1921 Census Household Returns will be made available.

It was this that prompted me to see what use was made of the Census by contributors to *Transactions* at a time when the household schedules were not available for public inspection, but statistics were very much in the air. As Edward Higgs has written: 'The mid nineteenth century was certainly a period when almost indiscriminate collection had become a mania, and the census can be seen as part of the movement to reveal the "state of the nation"'. The British Society of the Advancement of Science had founded a Statistical Section in 1833 and had held its annual meeting in Liverpool in September 1854. It is perhaps not surprising that several papers read to the Society made use of the 1851 Census. Not only did the 1851 Census gather more information than those held previously but it was 50 years since the first census was taken in 1801.

Transactions (Vol.7, 1853-1854) included a paper, 'Science in Lancashire and Cheshire', which John Towne Danson had previously printed and had sent to all those who were on the Society's list of members. The Council had decided to include part of Danson's paper in *Transactions* because it believed that too few papers had been included on science, 'even in the extended sense of the term'. While touching on many different aspects of science, Danson also referred to the 1851 Census as supplying information on 'the number, ages and civil conditions of the people', pointing out that not



much use had been made of this, and its particular relevance to the 'densely populated' Liverpool district. He urged the Society to investigate the 'ethnology' of the North-Western division (Lancashire and Cheshire) and the impact of immigration, particularly from Ireland, on the 'characteristics of the population'.

Danson, a Vice President of the Society, followed this up in the following volume with two papers: 'Liverpool: memoranda touching its area and population during the first half of the present century' and 'On the area and population of the Manchester district'. Here he pointed to various problems in defining the area of towns when comparing population figures between censuses. But it was his 'Science in Lancashire and Cheshire' article which, by his own account, was noticed by Thomas A. Welton in London; who was already developing his own statistical tables because, like Danson, he was interested in the 'great lessons embodied in the census'. Their jointly-conceived 'On the population of Lancashire and Cheshire and its local distribution during the fifty years 1801-1851' was published in four parts in *Transactions* (vols. 9 – 12). The first paper was read to the Society on 23rd April 1857. Danson explained that 'accounting for the actual progress and distribution' of the population in the North-Western division had been something of a task and that they would need four evenings to present their data to the Society. While in 1851 Lancashire and Cheshire occupied one twentieth of the area of the UK, this division had one seventh of the population.

Parts One and Two were written by Danson and Parts Three and Four by Welton, who was also responsible for all the tables. While much of Part One was taken up by differentiating between town and countryside, the second paper was concerned with local variations in the 'rapid' increase in population across the division. The rapid growth of 'Birkenhead (or South Liverpool)' was cited – Danson argued that, in terms of growth, the two towns facing each other across the Mersey should be seen as one. He stressed that the authors' interest went beyond statistics, declaring that the movement of population in the North-West division had brought together 'a very large number of people…under circumstances of which the history of the world affords no previous example' with 'momentous consequence' not only for the country but for the world.

In Part Three Welton focused on immigration and emigration in the 'country' districts, pointing to problems with the Registrar's definition of counties which made it appear that some people had moved out of their district. He concluded that, except in Liverpool and Manchester, the increase in population by immigration in each district came from people in the immediate vicinity. In the final paper Welton presented a detailed overview of the distribution of occupations as well as 'a somewhat lengthened investigation' into births, marriages, deaths, and fertility. The authors concluded that the diversity of death rates as they related to place and gender appeared 'to be traceable in a great measure to occupations, and the modes of life they induce'.

It has not been my intention here to comment on the authors' methodology or even list their conclusions, but rather to point towards ideas that were preoccupying at least some members of our Society in the 1850s. How would members

have reacted to Danson's paper, 'on the uses of Learned Societies: and in particular of the Historic Society' read on 14th April 1859 (Vol 11, 1858-1859)? The time had come, he argued, for such societies to justify their existence. Philanthropy was not enough to relieve misery when it was the causes of misery that needed to be removed. To do this they had to be understood, and he hoped that the Historic Society would contribute to the building of a 'Social Science'. However, at the same time as Welton was developing his idea of a social science, David Buxton, Principal of the Liverpool School for the Deaf and Dumb, was making use of information from the Census in a very different way and reporting his observations to the Society. I hope to say more about David Buxton in our next Newsletter.

– Dr Christine Verguson

D. Kirby, *Angel Meadow: Victorian Britain's Most Savage Slum*, (2020)

A review of this book appeared in *Transactions* following its initial publication in 2016, but as it has now been reissued on three occasions, it was felt appropriate to include this brief reminder of its value. Writing the book was clearly a personal journey for the author, who had learnt that in the 1860s his ancestor William Kirby settled in Angel Meadow. He had travelled from Ireland seeking work and it was here that four of his children would die prematurely.

The book opens as the eighteenth century was drawing to a close, when Angel Meadow was a pleasant area, north of Manchester and home to many of the town's better-off residents. However, the rapid growth of the cotton industry led to its decline. Cotton mills and other factories were built, and those who could afford to leave did so. Their large homes quickly became rat infested, disease-ridden lodging houses in which the desperate poor were forced to live. Others had to share squalid cellar dwellings or poor-quality houses, most of which were overcrowded and without adequate sanitation.

Kirby is a journalist and he puts his skills to good use in describing the day-to-day lives of Manchester's underclass in Angel Meadow. One particularly moving account tells of three men seen in the paupers' graveyard of St Michael's Church attempting to open a grave. Realising they had been seen, they fled, abandoning the body of a newly born baby girl. It was discovered they were helping the mother give the baby a Christian burial rather than simply abandoning the corpse, which was then common practice. The impoverished mother, Eliza Leather, was found and a post-mortem revealed her daughter was stillborn two days before the failed burial attempt. She escaped serious criminal charges, but at the inquest, the coroner criticised her for not paying the sixpence, equivalent of £3 today, for a pauper's burial, thereby displaying a lack of understanding of what true poverty was.

Inevitably, Angel Meadow became home to criminals, many of them extremely violent, together with other ne'er-do-wells. There was a great deal of alcohol-fuelled anti-social behaviour. It was estimated that in the 1830s there were more than seventy-five taverns and gin shops in the area, all of them the haunts of burglars, thugs, confidence tricksters, beggars, and prostitutes. Kirby provides the reader with graphic accounts of their lives.

The destruction of Angel Meadow began with the Housing Act of 1930, the aim of which was to demolish the country's slums. In December 1940, bombs dropped from German aeroplanes completed the task. This fascinating book is essential reading for those interested in the negative aspects of industrialisation and Manchester's emergence as a great city of in the nineteenth century.

– Martin Baggoley, HSLC

J. Moher, *Walter Citrine: Forgotten Statesman of the Trades Union Congress*, (2021)

Understanding place and feelings of belonging are important to understand how historical figures operated. In a 2012 chapter on 'Historians and Labour parties', Prof. Andrew Thorpe argued that fellow labour and political historians should seek to understand how place and background shapes a politician's 'mental map' – the way a person orients and locates themselves in the world – and influences how a policymaker or activist sees the world, interprets its problems, and acts. Similarly, the American

biographer Robert Caro has long argued that 'places', and the experiences had in them, often explains a lot about later action. Any chronicler of one of Britain's leading inter-war union figures, Walter Citrine, would need, therefore, need a thorough understanding of the role of Merseyside in his political education.

In this comprehensive and lively new biography, Dr Jim Moher carefully examines the formative influence of an early life and union career on Merseyside, together with the continued residence there of his close family, on Citrine's developing national career. It also discusses his career as an electrician, his climb though Trade Union organisation in Liverpool and Manchester, taking in a failed 1918 parliamentary candidacy at Wallasey, before explaining his move to the TUC headquarters in London and his long residence in Wembley. While Citrine did not reside in the north-west again, Moher demonstrates how his experiences their shaped his actions as a senior trade unionist. In many ways, it was the skills that the subject learned in the north-west that equipped him for national success.

Moher both advocates for his subjects significance in his own right and succeeds demonstrate how his place in history was compatible with the true force of nature that inhabits and often haunts the shadows of his story, Ernest Bevin. For, if we accept that Citrine was the interwar union movement's most significant administrator, Bevin was undoubtedly its greatest leader. This rivalry dominates the middle third of the book, before the final chapters follow the subject to a senior role at the National Coal Board, through his career pinnacle (for a former Merseyside electrician) as inaugural Chairman of the newly nationalised British Electricity Authority, through to his later years as a Peer of the Realm. As with many who are ennobled, Lord Citrine of Wembley's title did not reflect his geographical origins. However, as Jim Moher has shown, these origins played a major role in shaping Walter Citrine's mental map. The transformation of this radical Scouse syndicalist into a knight, a privy councillor, and peer or the realm is an excellent story, being well told, thoughtfully argued, and methodically evidenced. It is both a timely labour of love and an important contribution to the surprisingly limited literature on its subject. For those interested in twentieth century political and labour history, especially as we approach the centenary of the 1926 General Strike, it is a worthwhile read.

– Dr Marc Collinson, Bangor

Forthcoming events

'Discovering Coccium: an archaeological account of Roman Wigan', Ian Miller (University of Salford), **16th June 2021**

'Blitzed: Liverpool Lives – stories from the exhibition', Kay Jones (Museum of Liverpool), **15th September 2021**

'History and development of municipal parks in Manchester and Salford', Sam Hayes (University of Salford), **20th October 2021**

Each of these events will be held via Zoom at 14:00 on the date given. Tickets are to be booked via our Eventbrite page (available here: https://bit.ly/3djZ3zk). Further details are available on the Society's website. Recordings of the lectures will be uploaded to YouTube.

Update on Belmont Community Primary School's evacuee project

Members will recall the Society's part-funding of a project on evacuees in Belmont, Lancashire (Newsletter No 73, January 2020). Its aim was to employ a 'skills-based' approach to the teaching the history of the Second World War, and involved a number of local history projects.

Research revealed that the school hosted evacuee children (a great many of whom came from Manchester's Jewish community) during the war, as well as refugees from Czechoslovakia. The Society's donation assisted with the production of a memories board, and its erection in an accessible part of the school.

Progress continues to be made. The pupils have now designed a memorial garden and bench, which have been created with help from local firms.

Information about the project can be found in the Historical Association's *Primary History* (No 87, Spring 2021) and the school's website, available here: https://bit.ly/3eAFFyO.